Trishul is a surface-to-air multi-role missile with a 9 km range having quick re-action time. A developmental flight trial of Trishul was conducted on May 11, 1998.

(b) Some countries such as USA, Canada, Japan and Australia have criticised India's Nuclear tests. Some countries have announced economic measures against India.

(c) Government have taken all steps necessary to explain the rationale underlying the decision to conduct the tests. Government has taken all possible steps to explain to various countries our unique record of restraint and our seriousness to actively engage in a constructive dialogue towards the objective of global nuclear disarmament. All efforts are being made to project our policies of restraint and responsible conduct to various countries.

Third Indo-US Defence Policy Group Meeting

2288. DR. RANBIR SINGH:
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the third Indo-US Defence Policy Group Meeting scheduled in November was postponed because of protocol problems;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what had been the position in earlier two meetings in regard to protocol of attending officials;

(d) the reasons for taking such a stand this time; and

(e) wheth ' the meeting has since been held?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (e) During the visit of the US Secretary of Defence Mr. William Perry to India in January 1995, it was agreed that there would be periodic consultations between the US Department of Defence and the Indian Ministry of Defence. These Policy Group meetings could include representatives from other Government agencies and departments from both sides as necessary. No specific levels were formally identified. This in-built flexibility in the arrangement enables the two sides to nominate officials as deemed appropriate and necessary from time to time. No dates have been fixed for the third meeting of the Defence Policy Group.

Unfit Submarines

2289. DR. GOPALRAO VITHAL-RAO PATIL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of submarines unfit/ damaged or not working at present and the causes therefor;

(b) whether it is not affecting the security and what steps Government propose to take, including acquisition of atomic prowered submarines; and

(c) whether India has the missile which can be launched from the submarine; if not, by when we are going to develop it?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) There are no unfit/damaged or non-working submarines with Indian Navy.

Regular preventive maintenance of submarines is undertaken in a planned manner during their operating life. Further, acquisition/modernisation of submarines is undertaken on a continuous basis to prevent the fleet from technological obsolescence and numerical reduction.

It will not be appropriate to disclose further details in the interest of our national security.

Recruitment of Jawans

2290. DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the jawans at various centres of the Ministry of Defence are being recruited through corrupt means and without proper verification of their character antecedents; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to ensure that no corrupt means are adopted at any level at the time of recruitment of jawans?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Recruitment of jawans is done through fair and transparent means and after proper verification of character and antecedents. There are however, complaints alleging corruption in the recruitment of jawans, which are being investigated and officials found guilty of corruption or any other misconduct, will be acted against appropriately.

Encounter with Pak Army

2291. SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian army has been recently engaged in one of the fiercest encounters with Pak army in the border areas close to the line of control in Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) There has been an increase in exchange of artillery and mortar fire along the Line of Control in the Kupwara district due to Pak efforts to give covering fire to the infiltrators. There have been some casualties on our side due to Pakistani firing.

A constant vigil is maintained on the border by our troops who are well-equipped and prepared to face any attempt at misadventure on the part of our adversaires.

Arrest of Smugglers

2292. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO:
SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Navy and Coast Guards arrested armed smugglers near Andaman and Nicobar Islands on 31st May, 1998;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to protest to the countries from where smugglers start their activities and to increase patrol in Indian waters to stop such activities?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The Indian Navy with the support of Coast Guard launched an operation on 30 May 98 to apprehend/destroy the trawlers, which according to a specific military intelligence, were carrying arms, ammunition and explosives and were likely to transit through Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

On 30 May 98, two trawlers were detected at a distance of 60 nautical miles North East of Narcondom island moving in a suspicious manner. When the Naval units were homed in to intercept them, the crew of both trawlers jumped after scuttling the first trawler and 26 persons along with some ammunition were apprehended by the Naval units. The trawler sank in the water on 31 May 98. The second trawler was seen on fire resulting in minor explosion and the trawler is now lying submerged in Narcondom island.

All the apprehended persons were handed over to the local police at Port Blair and their interrogation is in progress.

Appropriate vigilance is being maintained by the armed forces for preventing the smuggling of arms in the North East region through the sea routes.